



« SOCIAL INCLUSION AUDIT AND TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL LIBRARIES »

Multiple Cities, Canada

Period of implementation: 2008-2010 | Study case written in 2010

The Social Audit Tool developed by the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) consists of 12 questions framed as outcome statements. For each of these questions, a library receives a score between 0 and 4 that provides an assessment of its capacity to meet the requirements for social inclusion in that area. The project started in 2008 and was completed in 2010. The beneficiaries are both the libraries and their clientele: The libraries develop closer relationships with their clients as well as a clearer understanding of the barriers to inclusion and the steps that must be taken to remove these barriers. For the libraries' clientele, the benefits are more equitable access to services and information, a more welcoming environment in which to obtain information and services, and a greater awareness of the resources available. Individual libraries can use the Toolkit to score themselves or to work with a neighbouring library to do reciprocal scoring. With an established baseline on the social inclusiveness of the library and its practices, the comprehensive toolkit can be used to track progress and improve the library's score.



The **Inclusive Cities Observatory** was launched in 2008 by the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights with the aim of creating a space for analysis and reflection on local social inclusion policies. The initiative was developed with the scientific support of Professor Yves Cabannes (University College of London) and the Centre for Social Studies (CES) from the University of Coimbra. At present, the Observatory contains more than sixty study cases mostly developed between 2008 and 2010. Even though many of these cases refer to policies that have already come to an end, they still have much to offer: from capitalizing on the learning acquired by other local authorities to discovering suggestive and alternative means to address social inclusion challenges from a local perspective.

Context

City context

The body that has developed and promoted the Social Inclusion Audit and Toolkit for Local Libraries is the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC), a non-profit ‘umbrella’ organization that “works collaboratively to build vibrant urban communities by strengthening the capacity of Canada’s urban libraries” (CULC website). In 2010, 38 urban libraries or library systems were listed as members of the CULC, located in most of the major cities of Canada. Collectively, these libraries served more than 7.5 million library users, employed more than 12,000 library workers, and spent C\$86 million on collections, including C\$8 million on digital resources (CULC website).

Spurred by the problems experienced by recent immigrants and other marginalized groups in accessing the information needed to participate fully in Canadian life, these libraries have chosen to collectively develop a tool to help them understand and address the barriers to social inclusion. This tool is then applied individually at the local level to address the unique situation in each community.

Decentralization context

Provincial governments have been assigned responsibility for municipalities (and hence public libraries) in the Canadian constitution. However, initiatives at the local level in Canada tend to be characterized by what has come to be known as *multilevel governance*, defined by Peters & Pierre (2001) as “negotiated, non-hierarchical exchanges between institutions at the transnational, national, regional and local levels” (p. 131). Responsibility for culture is not mentioned explicitly in the national Constitution and is therefore considered an area of shared jurisdiction. As Gattinger (2008) has noted, “there is significant interdependence between the various levels of government, and with non-government actors in the cultural domain” (p. B4). As a result, many initiatives such as the one described in this case study, which is located at the nexus of culture (libraries and literacy) and social policy (social inclusion and participation), are spear-headed by non-profit organizations rather than governments.

Social context

Canada is one of the world’s most urban and diverse nations, with 80% of its citizens living in urban areas and listing more than 200 ethnic origins, according to Census returns. The majority of immigrants and newcomers settle in cities, particularly in the three largest cities of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. This concentration has created integration challenges in the larger cities, which have had to make significant investments to ensure that newcomers have access to language training, job information, and social services information. As one of the more prominent municipal bodies, the public library is frequently the conduit through which immigrants and other marginalized groups, such as the poor or the disabled, acquire the information they need to access these and other public services. Given the national nature of this case, Table 1 presents a range of general statistics on Canada.

Table 1. General statistics on Canada

Total Canadian population (2006):	31,612,897
Top ten ethnic origins of the population as reported in 2006 Census:	10 million Canadians 6.6 million English 4.9 million French

	4.7 million Scottish 4.4 million Irish 3.2 million Germans 1.4 million Italians 1.3 million Chinese 1.2 million Ukrainians 1.0 million Dutch
Population of Aboriginal people (North American Indian, Métis, and Inuit):	1.2 million or 4% of the total population (2006)
Population of persons with disabilities:	4.4 million (14.3% of population) (2006)
GDP per capita:	\$35,812 (2007 HDI-PPP US\$)
Household disposable income:	\$58,300 (median after tax income 2007)
UN Human Development Index (2007) ranking:	#4 out of 109 countries
OECD Human Poverty Index (2009) ranking:	#12 out of 109 countries
Percentage of population living below 50% of median income (2000-2005):	13%
Percentage of persons aged 25 to 64 by level of educational attainment (2006):	Less than high school: 15% High school diploma: 24% Trades certificate: 12% College diploma: 20% University certificate below bachelor level: 5% University degree: 23%
Percentage of adults having less than high school (2006):	25-34 years of age: 11% 35-44 years: 13% 45-54 years: 16% 55-64 years: 23%
Access to the internet at home (2008):	74.6% of all Canadians Over 96% of Canadians in high-income households Only 43% of low-income households

Policy development

The Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) defines *social inclusion* as “the participatory, authentic, and accountable manner in which institutions uphold and reinforce the principles of access, equity and, as a result, social inclusion for all” (CULC website). In the library domain, social inclusion is further defined as the manner in which public libraries:

- Understand and engage their communities;
- Explore, view and challenge barriers, values and behaviours;
- Develop, implement, and evaluate systems, programs, policies and procedures;
- Provide equitable access to services and decision-making opportunities; and
- Demonstrate the level of inclusion through tangible outcomes (Social Inclusion Audit and Toolkit website).

The Social Audit Tool developed by the CULC consists of 12 questions framed as outcome statements.¹ For each of these questions, a library receives a score between 0 and 4 that provides an assessment of its capacity to meet the requirements for social inclusion in that area. There are three sets of indicators:

Indicators of openness – These provide an indication of how well the library knows its community. There are two assessment instruments in this section:

1. The library in consultation with the community assessed the demographic profile of the community – it understands the needs of the community's different cultural groups, it understands the gaps in programs and services, and it understands collections relevant to these groups.
2. The library has assessed full-time, part-time, and volunteer diversity and has developed, implemented, and evaluated strategies to increase diversity.

Indicators of intentionality – These provide an indication of how well the library reinforces the principles of social inclusion and how well it integrates these principles into policies and programs in both the short- and long-term. There are seven assessment instruments in this section:

3. Removing barriers to inclusion is made explicit in the library's strategic plan, goals, policies, and planning documents, and are articulated in the mission/vision statement.
4. The library has an active joint team of managers and non-managers dedicated to assessing and addressing barriers to inclusion. It has also incorporated removing barriers to inclusion into policy and service planning structures within the organization.
5. An internal team has developed and now works with a group representative from its target community for guidance in its efforts to remove barriers to inclusion.
6. A plan of action has been developed which includes: analysis of community needs and gaps in service; annual social inclusion audit results; targeted strategies for governance, human resources, training/learning, programs/services, collections development, and implementation and evaluation.
7. The library has regular training and learning initiatives and discussions with the staff team(s) and external stakeholders on methods to remove barriers to inclusion and to increase the degree of cultural competency and inclusionary practices internally.

¹ More detailed descriptions of the indicators and scoring methodology can be found on the Social Inclusion and Audit Toolkit website: <http://www.siatoolkit.com>.

8. With community input and participation the library has developed and implemented various targeted community outreach and communications plans to introduce and promote the library and its services to the community/groups.
9. The library has established financial resources within this year's fiscal budget to implement the action plan – in particular, the library has set budget for training/learning, communications/outreach, programs/services, and collections development.

Indicators of inclusion – These provide an indication of how well the library has removed barriers to inclusion. There are three assessment instruments in this section:

10. The implementation of strategies to remove barriers to opportunity and inclusion has resulted in increased diversity in full-time, part-time, and volunteer positions (including the board of trustees).
11. The library has developed and implemented a plan of action to remove barriers to inclusion that has resulted in an increase in: library cards issued, library use, program attendance, numbers of programs offered, additional or expanded collections, and room bookings.
12. The library has developed and implemented a plan of action to remove barriers to inclusion that has resulted in: collaborative partnerships with community groups to develop programs/services, collaborative partnerships with community groups to deliver programs/services, and a more robust consultation process with community members and groups who do not use, or seldom use, the library.

The Social Inclusion Audit requires that each of the 12 questions/statements are scored *twice* – once to assess current status in meeting the outcome and a second time to assess progress in meeting the outcome over time.

The scoring scale for *status* is as follows:

- 0 – Not in place / not started / organizations does not meet requirements
- 1 – Organization meets minimal requirements
- 2 – Organization meets partial requirements
- 3 – Organization meets substantial requirements
- 4 – Organization meets all or most requirements

The scoring scale for *progress* is as follows:

- 0 – Not in place / not started / absent / stopped
- 1 – Declining
- 2 – Improving
- 3 – Stable performance
- 4 – Exceptional gains

These two sets of scores are tallied so that there is a score for each indicator of inclusion and a total score.

Indicator	Number of questions	Total score
Openness	2 (Scored twice = 4)	16 (maximum)
Intentionality	7 (Scored twice = 14)	56 (maximum)
Inclusion	3 (Scored twice = 6)	24 (maximum)
Total	12 (Scored twice = 24)	96 (maximum)

Libraries with total scores of 0 to 26 are advised to 'be open to change'. Those with scores of 27 to 48 are advised to 'become intentional'. Those with scores of 49 to 70 are counselled to 'refine your work'. Those with scores of 71 to 96 are advised to 'mentor others' (Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit website).

Background

In 2004 the CULC began to address the issue of social inclusion through technological initiatives, but it soon concluded that a broader approach was needed that addressed not only the digital divide, but also the fact that marginalized individuals may not possess the literacy or 'meaningful social practices' to use the technologies effectively (Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit website).

In 2006, the CULC undertook a multi-year research project to address the issue of social inclusion and how member libraries could better address how they provide library service to marginalized segments of the Canadian population. Research to develop the Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit began in 2008. It was decided to focus on immigrant youth in the pilot project, but the goal was always to develop a tool that could be used to address the social inclusion of other groups as well.

Policy goals

The CULC's Statement on Diversity and Inclusion outlines its policy objectives in the area of inclusion. It states that:

"Canada's urban public libraries recognize that a diverse and pluralistic society is central to our country's identity. Public institutions, including public libraries, have a responsibility to contribute to a culture that recognizes and celebrates this diversity. Libraries can help to encourage an attitude of inclusion by ensuring that all residents of Canada receive public library service that is respectful. Canada's large urban public libraries recognize and will energetically affirm the dignity of those they serve, regardless of capabilities, or personal wealth. All Canadian residents should be able to seek information and engage in personal discovery free from any attempt by others to impose values, customs, or beliefs."

The following are the types of information and services that public libraries aim to provide in order to help break down barriers to inclusion:

- Government, health, and community resources
- Targeted and relevant services
- Information and communication technologies such as free computer and internet use
- Potential job opportunities
- Information on Canada and local communities
- Tools that help youth build leadership skills

In some cases, libraries may also provide exposure to systems, practices, and governance that help overcome settlement and language barriers, as well as language instruction (Social Inclusion Audit website).

AKTC's long-term strategy focused on the physical upgrading of the building stock and the socioeconomic development of the community, two complementary objectives aimed at the general revitalisation of the entire district.

Chronological development and implementation

Research to develop the Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit began in 2008 using the following methodology:

- Review of existing literature to gather information on and perform a critical analysis of social inclusion, social inclusion audits, and social inclusion in both organizational and library contexts.
- Solicitation of information and feedback from four pilot library locations using community-based research and participatory methods.
- Assessment of frameworks used in the development of other social inclusion audits and cultural competency assessment worldwide.
- Interviews with authors of other social inclusion audits to assess the methods used in the development of the audit tools.
- Assessments of the information gained by the users of existing audit and assessment tools to assess the efficacy and use of these tools.
- Development of a definition of social inclusion that reflects the library context and reality as an organization and as a community centre.

The CULC determined that the concepts of openness, intentionality, and inclusion were the key indicators that should be included in the Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit. It also designed the Toolkit to ensure that it could capture progress, which would allow libraries to compare performance over consecutive years as well as with other libraries.

The Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit was completed and published in 2010.

Stakeholders, beneficiaries and participatory methodologies

The Toolkit recommends that library staff from all levels (managers and non-managers) be on the library's working committee on social inclusion. It also recommends that the members of this working committee complete the audit or provide assistance to a small group of library staff to do so. Each library should engage the community in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the audit tool. However, the community advisory committee should not participate in the completion of the audit itself (Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit website).

The beneficiaries of the Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit are intended to be both the libraries and their clienteles. The libraries develop closer relationships with their clients as well as a clearer understanding of the barriers to inclusion and the steps that must be taken to remove these barriers. For the libraries' clienteles, the benefits are more equitable access to services and information, a more welcoming environment in which to obtain information and services, and a greater awareness of the resources available. Marginalized individuals are also more likely to acquire library skills that will be useful to them in their educational and employment pursuits if the library is socially inclusive.

The first step in the Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit requires that the library become familiar with the groups in the community that are currently facing barriers to inclusion. This will, of course,

differ from community to community. Therefore, the library is encouraged to assess the demographic profile of its community, to define the target group upon which it will focus its efforts and implement a series of focus groups, stakeholder interviews and surveys to understand how the target community group uses the library and its services (Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit website).

The Social Inclusion Audit Tool also provides information on how to engage in community outreach, how to establish a community advisory committee, and how to assess and increase the diversity of the library's board of directors, staff, and volunteers (Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit website).

Institutionalization and financing

The Social Inclusion Audit and Toolkit is freely accessible online at the CULC's website (<http://www.culc.ca/about/>) and at its own dedicated website (<http://www.siatoolkit.com>). It is also available in hardcopy at a price of C\$109, and can be ordered at info@culc.ca. As well, there is a videotape on the website that can be used as a teaching tool to help libraries use the Social Inclusion Audit and Toolkit.

The CULC also held a pre-conference workshop at the 2009 Canadian Library Association Conference to acquaint others in the library community with the tool. The institutionalization of the audit and implementation process in individual libraries is dependent on the organizational agency and will of each library to adopt the audit and toolkit process.

Over the approximately three years it took to develop the Social Inclusion Audit and Toolkit, total expenses were about C\$38,000. Sources of funding were as follows:

Funding sources:		
Laidlaw Foundation		\$18,800
Wellesley Institute		\$10,000
CULC (including staff time)		approximately \$15,000
Total funding received		\$43,800
Development costs included:		
Human resources (researchers, administrators, editors)		\$21,000
Research support costs:		
Honoraria	\$2,400	
Conference and telephone	\$1,000	
Final report	\$3,100	
Meals/refreshments	\$1,300	
Technology/office expenses	\$1,400	

Translation	\$7,400	
Transportation	\$700	\$17,300
Total		\$38,300

The cost for libraries to implement the Social Inclusion Audit and Toolkit is difficult to calculate as most libraries are only beginning the process of using the tool. The CULC figures that if they hire a consultant to help them with the process, the direct costs are \$7,500. However, the value of staff time is more difficult to calculate, and will be in addition to this approximate cost.

Outcomes and reflections

Key results and achievements

The CULC has developed a tool that individual libraries can use to score themselves or to work with a neighbouring library to do reciprocal scoring. With an established baseline on the social inclusiveness of the library and its practices, the comprehensive toolkit can be used to improve the library's score. Key results can be expressed as outcome statements flowing from each of the sets of indicators:

- *Openness* – A library is open when it understands its community, as well as its community's needs.
- *Intentionality* – A library is intentional when it reinforces the principles of social inclusion in the short- and long-term by integrating them into the strategic and operational framework of the library.
- *Inclusion* – A library is inclusive when it collaborates with the community and when the community is reflected in the library's strategies, operations, human resources, programming, and collections.

Although only a few libraries have started to use the tool to date, it has been useful in giving them insight into the benefits of community engagement and in understanding how social inclusion must be 'threaded in' to all aspects of a library's planning and operations. In many cases, this was a knowledge-building process for library staff, as they developed connections with new stakeholders and learned how to engage with them.

Main obstacles faced

Interviews with key informants indicated that there are a number of challenges that have to be overcome in developing such a tool. Some libraries are uncomfortable with the participatory process that must be engaged in with marginalized groups in order to carry out the social inclusion audit. Sometimes it is difficult to maintain contact with persons from the marginalized groups, especially if inadequate resources are allocated for transportation, child care, and food/refreshments to support their involvement.

Replicability

The Social Inclusion Audit Toolkit is a generic instrument that could be used by libraries in other countries. The principal limiting factors would be the degree to which libraries have information on local diversity and the human and financial resources to undertake the audit.

Further information

This case was researched and written by M. Sharon Jeannotte, Senior Fellow, Centre on Governance, University of Ottawa, under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Duxbury at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal, in 2010.

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References

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